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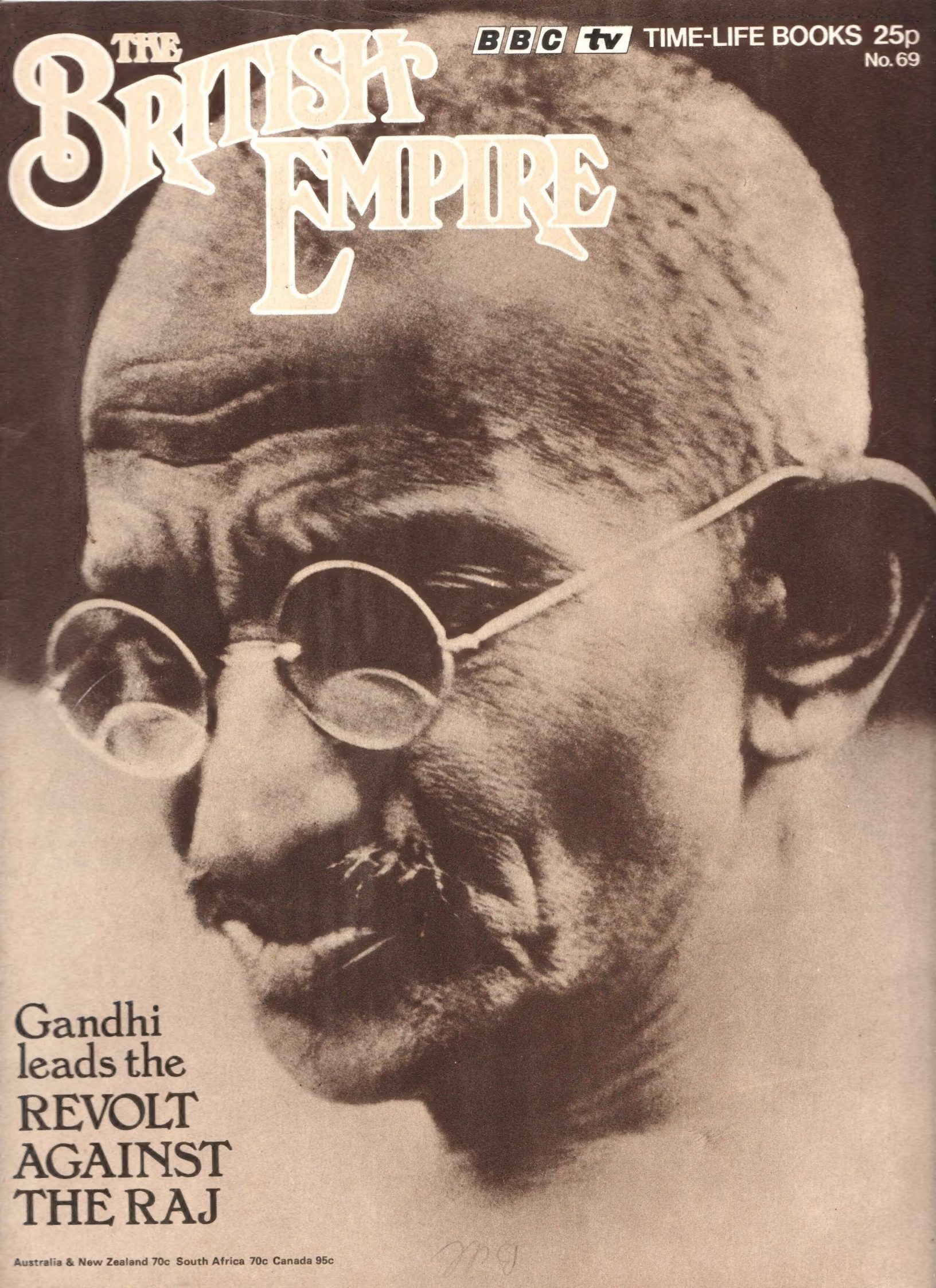

Gandhi leads the REVOLT AGAINST THE RAJ

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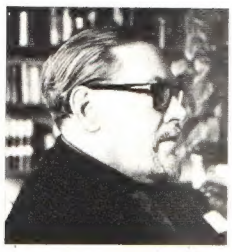

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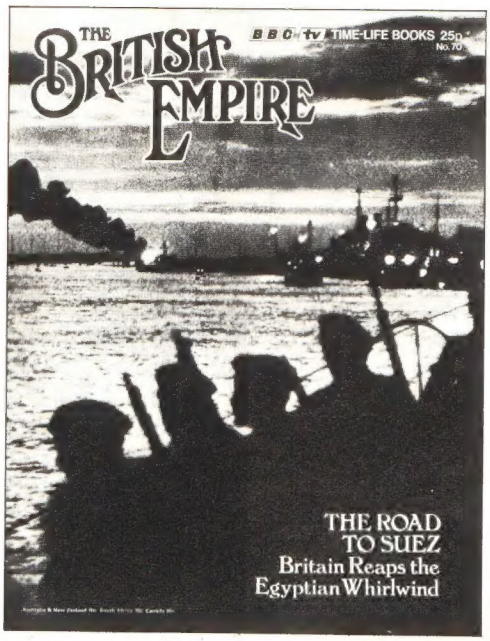
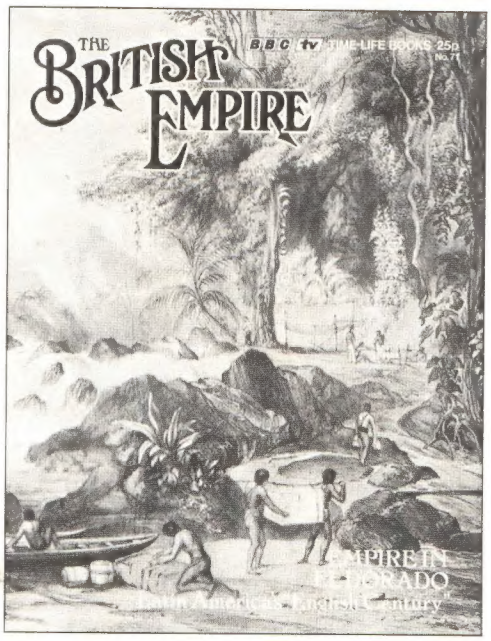
Published by Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V. in co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Distributed in the U.K. by Time-Life International Ltd. and BBC Publications.

Printed in England by Jarrold and Sons Ltd. Norwich.





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REVOLT AGAINST THE RAJ

It seemed inconceivable at the turn of the century that the British would ever leave India. While the British were talking of "the magnificent work of governing an inferior race," the Indian Congress, the strongest force for Indian nationalism, was promising "unswerving loyalty to the British Crown."

Yet, less than 50 years later, it was equally inconceivable that the Raj could survive. In that brief span, a few Indian leaders had given their countrymen a national identity and pride in being Indian that had thrust the country rapidly and inexorably towards independence.

by Michael Edwardes

On Tuesday, June 22, 1897, the British in India were engaged in celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen-Empress Victoria. They did so with military parades, dances and champagne dinners. At Poona, the summer seat of the Governor of Bombay, the festivities were particularly glittering. That night there was a dinner-party at Government House. As the guests left in their carriages they were startled by the sound of firing. A woman's screams brought guests and guards to two carriages in which one man, Walter Rand, lay dying and another, Charles Ayerst, was dead. Political assassination had emerged as a weapon against the British Raj.

The authorities were caught off balance, but not for long. Surprise was replaced by angry panic. Was the murder of Englishmen a signal for a popular uprising? The Indians certainly had many reasons to revolt. A serious famine in western India had been followed by the appearance for the first time in India of bubonic plague. Doctors knew neither the cause of, nor the treatment for this terrifying scourge. In Bombay alone, 20,000 people died, and by 1897 the disease had spread to the countryside. In Poona, the Chief Plague Officer, Mr. Rand, whose reputation as a stern disciplinarian had preceded him, had adopted brutal methods to prevent the spread of infection. British troops had been called in to destroy property believed contaminated. Men, women and children from allegedly infected areas had been segregated in special plague camps. The troops were not gentle. While searching houses for suspected victims, they damaged religious shrines, looted, and often sent to camps people who were in fact free from the plague.

To the inhabitants of Poona, Mr. Rand's men appeared to be carrying on a reign of terror. The native-language press demanded retaliation. "What people on earth, however docile," thundered *Kesari* ("The Lion"), "will continue to submit to this sort of mad terror?" Against "this monstrous engine of oppression" everyone had the right of self-defence. According to certain Hindu sects no blame was attached even to killing if it were disinterested and a group of young men had therefore established a "society for removing obstacles to the Hindu religion" and murdered Mr. Rand and his assistant.

The authorities moved a large force of police into Poona. Secret agents moved among the people, but they could not find the assassins or any clue to their identity. A collective fine on the city produced no more than the money. But the failure of the police resulted in calls for strong action in the English-language newspapers. Indian nationalism seemed about to embrace violent revolution – a radical and frightening move away from the quiet nationalism that had been the pattern over the previous 30 years.

Indian nationalism was a child of the Raj – at first uncritical and only gradually becoming rebellious. The effects of English education in 19th-Century India had been to produce a middle class, identifying itself in many ways with the alien rulers, speaking their language, cherishing their political philosophy, and hoping that the promises so frequently made to them that one day they would be accepted as partners would be fulfilled.

As the second half of the 19th Century moved to its close, that fulfilment seemed

Indian servants pose proudly with their young sahib – a scene that epitomizes the traditional and apparently immutable relationship of ruled to rulers at the turn of the century.

as far away as ever. The reluctance of the government to share its powers with educated Indians and the unquestioning belief by the British in their racial superiority pushed the middle classes into political action. It also split them into two camps.

One of these, clustered around the Indian National Congress, which had been established in 1885, still clung to its belief in British institutions, in liberal democracy, in British law and justice.

The first conference of the Congress was held, oddly enough, at the instigation of a retired Englishman, Allan Hume, who thought that "it would be of great advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters." He could hardly have known that this organization would grow into the most effective voice for Indian independence.

But that was some way in the future. At the turn of the century, members of Congress had no desire for independence for India, but only for active participation in the government of the country. They were not anti-British. On the contrary, they believed that the British had brought many blessings to India, and that being a part of the British Empire was not only a gift of Providence but good fortune as well. At a meeting of Congress in the plague year of 1897, one of the delegates said to his audience: "Just look for a moment at the training we are receiving. From our earliest schooldays the great English writers have been our classics. Englishmen have been our professors. . . . English history is taught in our schools. The books we generally read are English books. . . . It is impossible . . . not to be penetrated by English ideas, not to acquire English concepts of duty, of rights, of brotherhood. . . . Imbued with these ideas and principles," he went on, "we naturally desire to acquire the full rights and to share the responsibilities of British citizenship."

The man who emerged during this time as leader of Congress, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, typified these middle-class Indians. He had many British friends and had often visited England. He believed that the inequalities and inadequacies of Hindu society were the only reason for India's political subordination to her foreign rulers. A cautious, rather sickly man, he wanted India to progress gradually in partnership with "the genius of the British people."

But there were others who did not share the faith and hope – and the innocence – of these fully Westernized Indians. Most of them were Western-educated also, but for them Western education had brought unease – and unemployment. In British India there were only a limited number of outlets for the educated. The unemployed found themselves without a place in Westernized society, or in that from which their education had cut them off. In fact, they began to look upon those Indians who *had* found a place in the world of the British – as government servants, lawyers, or businessmen – as just as much their enemies as the British themselves. Had they not become bastard Englishmen? To the educated unemployed, the appeal of religious nationalism offered a refuge, a chance of identity with something greater than themselves.

It was only right that religious nationalism should have found its first spokesman in Bengal, for it was there that English education had had its most profound effects. Much of the inspiration came from the works of a Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, who had been a member of the Civil Service until 1891 but had never reached high rank. He wrote in Bengali, using English literary forms to praise Hindu religious sentiments and glorify the Hindu past. His poem *Bande Mataram* ("We pay homage to our Mother") was to become the "Marseillaise" of Hindu nationalism, identifying love of the mother country with love of god. Chatterji claimed that the period of British rule was but a prelude to the revival of Hindu India.

There were others, too, who claimed to find in the Hindu past a real hope for the future, for an India that was Indian rather than fake British. It was, however, not in Bengal but in the province of Bombay that this looking backwards in order to see the shape of the future first took the form of positive political action. The man who gave it that form was Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Tilak, Western-educated, at first cooperated with the moderate English-thinking liberals but soon realized that they represented only a minority, cut away from the people of India. The British, Tilak was convinced, would never give India her freedom, and if they granted some political power it would only be to those who were most in sympathy with their rule. This would simply mean exchanging one set of alien rulers for a partnership of two. Tilak turned to the organization of mass action in Bombay province whose inhabitants looked back in admiration to the 17th-Century Maratha empire, which had contained Bombay. There was a recent tradition of Maratha independence. Through his newspaper, *Kesari*, he promoted two annual festivals: one, designed to recall the glories of the Maratha empire, was dedicated to the Maratha hero, Sivaji; and the other was dedicated to the most popular of the Hindu gods, Ganapati. These festivals were, in his own words, designed to be a "powerful engine for imparting instruction to the masses."

Tilak quickly assumed leadership of the Hindu masses in western India. In doing so he was, paradoxically, taking a more orthodox Western view of the tools of political change than the liberal moderates of the Indian National Congress. The history of European democracy in the 19th Century, he said, was the history of revolution, not reform. The British did not fear the men of Congress, but they had every reason to fear a popular uprising – and was not assassination a weapon of revolution? This fear turned the British against Tilak, and he was arrested after the Poona murders in 1897.

Yet try as they did, the police could find no connection between Tilak and the murders at Poona. He was therefore charged with sedition. The Governor was reluctant to press such vague charges, but gave in to the clamour of the English press.

The trial was a travesty. Two articles by Tilak were subjected to the most perverse interpretation by the presiding judge, who defined "sedition" as "disaffection" or "want of affection" for British rule and further maintained that this meant "ill will, dislike, and enmity." The jury found Tilak guilty by a majority vote. The six Europeans voted "guilty" and three Indians "not guilty." Tilak was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment.

THE POLITICS OF DISASTER

When natural disasters – famine or plague – hit the subcontinent of India, its British rulers faced up to their responsibilities with varying degrees of vigour and success. The administration's battle against the particularly severe famines at the end of the 19th Century was both energetic and effective. Development projects were set up in affected areas to provide work and wages, the construction of new railways was launched, partly to carry grain to where it was most needed, rent was remitted and a certain amount of free relief was granted. Mercifully, the measures had some effect.

The administration's fight against plague, however, was not successful and Indians were left with an abiding memory of the peremptory and often brutal nature of British paternalism. Well-intentioned action thus intensified nationalism.

Famine sufferers in Ahmedabad line up in rows, food plates in front of them, patiently awaiting the government handout of grain that kept them from starvation.

Famine victims (left, above and right) cling precariously to life during the famine of 1896–97, the worst of the century.

A jet of water from a British flushing engine plays on an infected house, not only cleansing it, but smashing anything breakable that might be inside.

The Great Bombay Blunder

The British learned with a vengeance the inadequacies of their short-sighted philanthropy during the Bombay plague of 1896–97. After a disastrous famine in 1896, bubonic plague broke out in Bombay and spread to Poona. Within a year it had killed 34,000 people. The British adopted drastic measures in their attempt to combat it. Lieutenant Walter Rand, a man with a reputation as a disciplinarian, was appointed Plague Officer and decided on a draconian policy of isolation. Anyone showing symptoms or suspected of being a contact was shut away in a plague camp. Houses were broken into, hosed down, fumigated and limewashed with no concern for the sensibilities of the inhabitants. The soldiers carried out Rand's orders with a toughness that, on occasions, became brutality. Complaints poured in about women being raped and money stolen.

All sections of the Indian community were outraged. The extremist Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who himself had asked the British for strong measures, headed a deputation to the Governor with suggestions about how the searches could be conducted more humanely. He was politely shown the door. As a direct result of British insensitivity in 1897, Rand and his deputy were murdered by terrorists. Assassination had for the first time become a political weapon to be used against the British Raj.

A plague officer could stop and search anyone for signs of infection, and then segregate him in a special plague camp.

Relatives stand sorrowfully round an area walled off especially for the burning of corpses. Both Hindu and Muslim victims ended in these mournful crematoriums.

A district officer warns villagers near Bombay not to resist anti-plague measures. The high-handed methods of the British administrators infuriated Indians.

1911

II. India Claims Nationhood

The news of Tilak's sentence spread his fame – and his ideas. Young men began to think that their future lay in manipulation of the masses and the use of violence. The moderates had failed them, with their obsequious flattery of alien ideas and their feeble requests for a slice of the cake.

Tilak's experience dramatized a conflict of generations. The leaders of Congress were men aware of the century of anarchy that had preceded British rule; but the young felt only the tensions of the time, and their own frustration.

This, however, was a highly localized feeling, over most of India the British Raj seemed as immutable – and as beneficent – as ever.

The impatient young men of India, organizing themselves into secret societies, reading about European revolutionary terrorism, waited another eight years for some great event that would make them the spearhead of mass protest. The British supplied it with their high-handed decision to divide up the province of Bengal. The province had proved too large to be administered as a single unit; now it was to become two separate provinces – West Bengal with a Hindu, and East Bengal and Assam with a Muslim majority. Here at last was the tinder to spark the flame of Hindu nationalism. Not only was the unity of the motherland threatened but so were the economic privileges of the Bengali Hindu, who had dominated the professional and business life of the undivided province.

Two weapons of protest emerged – the economic boycott of British goods and the terrorists' bombs. The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who in March, 1905 had dismissed the anti-partition agitators as "petty volcanoes who scream and screech and throw their torrents of mud into the air," by October was forced to admit that "the agitation is now being conducted by methods of open terrorism and violence."

During 1906, violence spread throughout Bengal. New secret societies were formed, bomb factories set up. The government assumed special security powers. Leaders were deported without trial, political organizations were declared illegal, many arrests were made and sentences of flogging imposed for many minor crimes. In 1907, the year of the 50th anniversary of the Mutiny, two attempts were made on the life of Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. In the same year a Dacca lawyer was assassinated. In April, 1908, two Englishwomen were killed when a bomb intended for a hated magistrate was thrown into the wrong carriage. The English-language newspaper, *The Pioneer*, immediately advocated exemplary reprisals. Mass arrests of suspected terrorists should, it said, be accompanied by "the intimation that at any repetition of the offence ten of them would be shot for every [British] life sacrificed." Repression did not – of course – reach this level. Nevertheless, newspapers, hitherto free, were prosecuted for sedition, many people were deported without trial and public meetings were severely restricted.

These methods appear to have worked to a certain extent. An attempt by young advocates of violent struggle to capture the leadership of Congress failed. The moderates were able to defend themselves and in 1907 the "extremists," as they were called, left Congress, not to return for nine years. The extremists suffered two further setbacks. Their leader, Tilak, who had been active again after his release from jail, was sentenced once more in 1908, this time to eight years' imprisonment for inflammatory comments on the murder of the two Englishwomen. Also the partition of Bengal was revoked in 1911, so removing the source of much popular discontent.

The government had also sought to assist the moderates by doling out a measure of reform. As the Viceroy Lord Minto put it, "We must give the medicine first, and then do all we can to take the taste away." Since 1861 there had been Legislative Councils both at the viceregal level and in the provinces. Essentially powerless, the Indians whom they included were in fact safe men nominated

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (below), imprisoned in 1908 for his inflammatory nationalism, became more moderate with age. He is shown on the right (front row, fourth from left) in 1919 as an equal member of a group of British and Indian dignitaries in Bombay.

In this First World War poster, an Indian soldier guards his country and his home against some undefined enemy. Despite the lack of a direct threat to India, 1¾ million men joined the Imperial forces in a last burst of pro-British loyalty.

by the government. By the Indian Councils Act of 1909, a number of the members were now to be elected, though by a very restricted electorate.

These reforms were the work of Lord Minto and the cautious Secretary of State for India, John Morley. Both believed that a small concession would encourage those Indians who were loyal to Britain, and that India's future would remain firmly and safely in British hands. Morley told Parliament that to give universal suffrage to India was "a fantastic and ludicrous dream."

Nevertheless, the moderates welcomed the reforms because, they said, the next lot could only move further towards responsible government.

The reforms were also well received by Indian Muslims, who in 1906 – frightened at the growing strength of Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim sentiment, particularly during the riots in Bengal – had founded their own political organization, the Muslim League. They asked for and were granted separate electorates for Muslims, a dangerous precedent.

The commencement of hostilities in Europe in August, 1914, produced an outburst of loyal enthusiasm in India, which in the light of subsequent events seems almost incomprehensible. Over a million men volunteered for the armed forces, messages of support came in from every level of Indian life, and there were large cash contributions of war loans.

The British in Britain were agreeably surprised and leapt to the conclusion that all the fears of violence and terrorism had been exaggerated. Politicians, it seemed, were ready to see Indian nationalism in a new light. No longer would claims for self-government be a dangerous step towards a break between India and the Empire. In November, 1914, the Under-Secretary of State for India emphasized the point in a statement in the House of Commons. "It is clear," he said, "that India claims to be not a mere dependent but a partner in the Empire, and her partnership with us in spirit and on battlefields cannot but alter the angle from which we shall henceforward look at the problems of the government of India."

Such statements were received by Indian nationalists with high hopes. They

continued on p. 1916

DOCTOR BRIGHTON

In the First World War, when India forgot her quarrel with Britain and helped close the Imperial ranks, 139,000 Indians fought in the mud of the Western Front. The British responded generously to such loyalty and, to care for the wounded, set up special hospitals along the south coast, most notably in Brighton, long known as "Doctor Brighton" for its bracing air. George IV's elaborate Indian-style Pavilion was aptly fitted out as a hospital, as was the town's workhouse, tactfully renamed the Kitchener Hospital.

Every attempt was made to provide comfort for Britain's Eastern soldiers. Different kitchens were provided for different religions, untouchables were banished to the lawns, and the wounded were cared for by orderlies of the same caste. The dead were treated with respect. Muslims were taken for burial to a near-by mosque and Hindus were cremated on a specially built *ghat* near Brighton, and their ashes scattered in the sea.

Two obliging Indian soldiers strike a loyal pose for the camera.

One ward in the converted Brighton Pavilion was

Indians, now recovered from their wounds, pack into a vast open charabanc for a day trip into the English countryside.

in the Dome, originally the royal stables.

While some convalescent Indians sun themselves on the Pavilion lawns, others leave for a walk through the town.

Two apprehensive Indian patients receive "electrical and galvanic treatment" at the Kitchener Hospital.

believed, with most of the other combatants, that the war would soon be over. But as the battles dragged on through the years, Indians noted that the tone of statements about India in the British Parliament seemed to become more and more restrained.

By 1915, the extremists had again emerged to voice popular fears and aspirations, their task eased by the death of Gokhale and Sir Pherozshah Mehta, the two most implacable opponents of the extremists, in that year.

Indian Muslims, too, were no longer so pro-British. The revocation of the partition of Bengal, announced at the magnificent Delhi Durbar of 1911 as a sop to Hindu nationalism, had shocked them deeply. They were further alienated from the British by the fact that their spiritual overlord, the Caliph of Turkey, found himself at war in 1914 with their temporal master, the King-Emperor of Britain. Under this pressure, many Muslims – among them the future creator of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah – urged the League to re-establish the link with the Congress Party. In 1916, this occurred, and Britain was once again faced with a united Indian opposition. But the Congress was about to change from a body whose watchword was caution, into a mass rally and the vanguard of militant Hindu nationalism which in turn again split the Muslims from them.

The government in London, worried by the course of the war in Europe and the confusion that might result on the North-West frontier from the collapse in 1917 of its ally, Tsarist Russia, began once again to fear trouble in India. There could be no question of repression – there were just not enough British troops available. Instead, bribery seemed to be called for. This conclusion led to the announcement of further reforms.

But conditions in India and the world had changed radically since the reforms of 1909, and both Muslims and Hindus were not so ready meekly to accept bounty from their overlords. For, by 1919, subject nations all over the world were looking for the right to determine their own futures, free from interference from the big powers, the interference that had led directly to the horror of the trenches. India was no exception: the need for self-determination had been urged throughout the war by many Indian leaders including an extraordinary Englishwoman, Annie Besant.

Annie Besant, who had first been attracted to India by her fascination with exotic religions, had taken the cause of *Swaraj* (self-government) to her heart and enthusiastically had become more Indian than the Indians, bullying them into recognizing their ancient heritage. When this "obstreperous old harridan," as *The Times* of London called her, was imprisoned briefly in 1916 at the age of 69, she instantly became a national heroine in India and on her release was elected President of Congress for its 1917 session.

The British also managed to dissipate any remaining goodwill by one of the most unimaginative and ill-timed moves they had made during their rule over the Indian sub-continent. At the same time as the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, arrived in India to consult with Indian leaders and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, about the impending reforms, a committee under Mr. Justice Rowlatt was sitting to "investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India," and to advise measures "necessary to enable Government to deal with them." The Rowlatt Bills effectively guaranteed that Indian nationalists would be suspicious of the proposed reforms.

These reforms – incorporated in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report – which the British hoped would both reward Indian loyalists and stifle unrest, were in fact quite radical, even by the changed standards of the time. The British government not only accepted the principle of self-government for India but was actually ready to prepare for it. In the provinces of British India, some of the government departments were to be handed over to elected Indian ministers. The electoral rolls were to be considerably enlarged. There was also a promise that the working of the reforms would be examined after ten years, and, it was implied, the next stage forward would then be decided upon.

Sir Winston Churchill (left), pictured here with two Viceroys, Lords Lansdowne (centre) and Curzon, believed that Indians would never be capable of ruling themselves.

Back in Britain, except for a few right-wing diehards, all parties supported the new reforms while Indian nationalists subjected the reforms to searching criticism. They ignored their radical character and criticized the fact that real authority still remained with the Viceroy.

But between the announcement of these reforms and their coming into force three years later events took place which were to produce a new national leader – Gandhi – who was to condemn any co-operation with "this satanic government."

The Rowlatt Committee had finished its deliberations and in 1919 two Bills incorporating its recommendations were introduced in Delhi. These harsh measures placed unlimited power in the hands of the executive and police to decide who was conspiring against the government, and allowed for a rapid trial of the accused who was denied counsel, a jury or an appeal. The Rowlatt Acts almost coincided with the announcement of the new reforms. To Indian nationalists, it seemed that while the British at Westminster were giving up some of their powers to Indians the government in Delhi was taking them away.

This was the turning-point for the growth of nationalistic fervour in India for, in the atmosphere of tension and indignation which united the political classes and the people as never before, a new leader, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, emerged who was to become the symbol of India to the world.

Gandhi, a lawyer of 49, had recently returned from South Africa, where he had spent almost the whole of his adult life There he had made his name as the leader of the Indian community in their fight against discrimination by the South African government, using his own method of protest which he called *satyagraha*, or "soul force." At first sight, it looked like no more than passive resistance; in fact it was something very different. To draw suffering on oneself and thus shame one's opponent into a change of heart, to die – but not to kill – for the truth: this was the essence of *satyagraha*.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915 he found his own country strange to him and spent a year or two travelling around, finding out what the people were thinking

Imperial Majesty Spurned

The visit to India of Edward, Prince of Wales and heir to the British Empire (right) in 1921 marked another turning-point in the growth of Indian nationalist sentiment.

For the first time, Indians openly ostracized the British royal house. When the Prince of Wales docked in Bombay he was greeted with a *hartal*, a strike called by Congress under the leadership of Gandhi, publicized in thousands of leaflets like the one below.

The Prince's reception was in sharp contrast to that given only ten years before to George V, who had been greeted with all due pomp and loyalty.

The King was shocked at the change and took it as an insult. When he met Gandhi years later, he asked the Mahatma sternly: "Why did you boycott my son?" Gandhi, stressing his impersonal political commitments, quietly replied: "Not your son, Your Majesty, but the official representative of the British Crown."

BOYCOTT THE PRINCE'S VISIT.

CONGRESS . . . CENTRAL KHILAFAT COMMITTEES' RESOLUTIONS

AND OUR DUTY

Do Not go to the Bunder
Do Not go to see the Procession
Do Not go to any Function held in connection with the visit
Do Not go to the Fete.
Do Not go to see the Illuminations
Do Not go to the Cricket Match
Do Not open Stalls in the Fair
Students should not take the sweets offered

BUT OBSERVE **COMPLETE HARTAL** ON THE 17th

AND ATTEND

BONFIRE and PUBLIC MEETING

On the grounds near Elphinstone Mills at 10 a.m. in KHADI DRE

At that time, although his reputation had preceded him, his views had always been those of the moderates, and no one had really considered him as either the spokesman or potential leader of Indian nationalism. He had been a supporter of the British and had even taken part in recruiting campaigns for the Indian Army. But he had been convinced by some experiments in passive resistance in India that there was a place for his kind of non-violent approach to political action.

Gandhi was right. His moral condemnation of the new security laws struck a chord in the hearts of all classes. By using religion, he made the political movement acceptable to all the people of India. He proposed a traditional Hindu method of protest – the *hartal*, a closing of all shops and places of business as a sign of mourning. All over India, people responded to Gandhi's call. A *hartal* was not just a negative act but a positive rededication of the spirit. People should take a ritual bath in the sea or river, should fast and pray. But such acts need discipline, and the tensions of the time were not in its favour. The *hartal* in many places led to violent rioting. Horrified, Gandhi tried to call off the strike, but it was like reasoning with a whirlwind. It merely grew more violent, and especially so in the Punjab.

There tensions ran particularly high. Thousands of demobilized soldiers had returned to their homes with little hope for the future. The government of the Punjab, believing the *hartal* to be merely a cloak for rebellion, was determined to suppress any signs of revolt. The British in the Punjab had a long tradition of action first and questions afterwards. The situation was ripe for an explosion. It took place on April 13, 1919, in the town of Amritsar.

Amritsar was a holy city, the centre of the faith of the Sikhs, tough farmers and fighting men who had once maintained their freedom in the last of the great Indian kingdoms to submit to British rule. Sikh nationalism still had a romantic appeal to many, but the causes of the disturbance that broke out in April were rooted mainly in economic distress. However, "sedition," or conspiracy, was the main fear of the government officials who feared that Bolsheviks had ordained the *hartal*. Their overstretched nerves were

IMPERIAL ATROCITIES

Butchery of Unarmed Punjab Natives at Angry General's Order

"HE WOULDN'T BE LAUGHED AT"

Flaring headlines in London's left-wing *Daily Herald* announces the massacre of Amritsar.

An Amritsar bazaar, photographed shortly after the massacre, stands almost deserted.

The ruins of a bank burnt down by Amritsar rioters testify to the hatred of Britain.

Turning Point at Amritsar

In 1919, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, commanding 90 Indian troops, nervously confronted a crowd of 15,000 Sikhs packed into a square in Amritsar, a Punjab city seething with unrest at recent anti-nationalist legislation. Fearing ridicule if he retreated or even a possible uprising – crowds had already burnt two banks, murdered five Europeans and beaten up a lady missionary – he gave the order to fire. While the crowd fought for the narrow exits, 379 men, women and children died and 1,560 fell wounded.

India was horrified, and to make matters worse, many British greeted Dyer's action with satisfaction. Though he was sent home in disgrace and was condemned by the Cabinet, some members of the House of Lords congratulated him and a public subscription raised £30,000 for him, of which £28,000 was contributed by one eccentric lady. Dyer himself had no doubts that he had acted correctly: he saw himself as the saviour of British India.

To Indians, it was now clear that British power grew out of the barrel of a gun. The massacre at Amritsar and the British reaction to General Dyer marked the end of any chance of Anglo-Indian harmony.

Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer had made his name as a strict disciplinarian on the North-West Frontier.

In the niche in this building, a lady missionary tried to shelter from the Amritsar mob.

tautened further by the riots that broke out on April 10. On that day, two nationalist leaders were arrested and a large crowd tried to enter the area of the city occupied by Europeans. They were turned back by armed police and began rioting, firing buildings and murdering Europeans in the very centre of the city instead.

The next day, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, an Irishman born and educated in India, arrived in Amritsar. His first act was to prohibit all public meetings. This was done on April 13 by sending men with drums to announce the order at certain places throughout the city. The places chosen appeared to be those where few, if any, of the citizens would hear them. It so happened that April 13 was the date of the annual horse fair and large numbers of countrymen had journeyed to the city. It is unlikely that many of them had heard General Dyer's discreet proclamation. At one o'clock on that day, Dyer was told that a public meeting had been called for half-past four on a large piece of waste land known as the Jallianwala Bagh.

"Bagh" means a garden, but there was nothing particularly floral about this place. There were a few trees and many dumps of refuse. The area was roughly a square, quite large, and almost completely surrounded by houses. Four narrow entrances, wide enough to let three or four people walk abreast, led into the Bagh from the surrounding streets. Dyer decided to wait and then, when the meeting had begun, make an example of those who had defied his orders. By four o'clock he heard that a great crowd had gathered in the Bagh – perhaps 5,000, perhaps as many as 20,000. His informants were not precise. Nor did they tell him, a stranger to Amritsar, just what the Jallianwala Bagh actually looked like. He did not, it seems, inquire. Apparently, Dyer's intention was to disperse the crowd by firing over their heads and speeding them on their way by driving his two armoured cars through what he obviously believed to be an open space. He did not expect much trouble, for he took only 90 men with him to deal with the meeting.

When Dyer arrived at the Bagh he discovered that his armoured cars could not get through the narrow entrances. Moving

with his men into the Bagh itself he was faced with a vast crowd, being harangued by speakers who were, he was convinced – though he could not hear them – rousing the mob to violence. There is little doubt that Dyer panicked, but he did not do the sensible thing and retire. Instead, he ordered his men to fire, without warning, into the crowd until their ammunition was exhausted. On his own admission, 1,605 rounds were fired. It was the crowd's turn to panic. As men tried to climb the walls they were picked off by gunfire, children ran screaming, some women threw themselves down a well. It was all over in ten minutes. Dyer withdrew, ordering the entrances to be blocked so that no one could escape and no medical attention reach the wounded. Officially, 379 were killed and over 1,560 wounded. Unofficially, there were probably a great many more.

Dyer went away thinking that his action had saved the Punjab from anarchy. But he had not restored order in Amritsar. Two days later he declared martial law, which was not lifted until June 9. During that period, anyone passing through the street where a woman missionary had been brutally attacked was forced to crawl on all fours; refusal meant being whipped. Public floggings were imposed for such minor offences as "the contravention of the curfew order, failure to salaam to a commissioned officer, for disrespect to a European, or refusal to sell milk."

In all this Dyer had the support of the Provincial Governor – but not of the government of India, which ordered an inquiry. But though the commission's criticism was couched in mild terms – the General's actions had been "unfortunate," or "injudicious" – there was no doubt that he was condemned. To the commission, Dyer gave several conflicting reasons for his actions. He had fired in self-defence; he could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but "they would have come back and laughed, and I would have made what I consider to be a fool of myself."

A few months after the massacre, a young Indian named Jawaharlal Nehru travelling by the night train from Amritsar to Delhi, overheard some of his fellow passengers talking. "One of them was holding forth in an aggressive and triumphant tone and I soon discovered he was Dyer, the hero of Jallianwala Bagh, and he was describing his Amritsar experiences. He pointed out how he had the whole town at his mercy and he had felt like reducing the rebellious city to a heap of ashes but he took pity on it and refrained. I was greatly shocked," added Nehru, "to hear his conversation and to observe his callous manner."

So were many others who, like Nehru, had formerly been lukewarm supporters of Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru and his father Motilal became close associates of Gandhi at this time, so close, in fact, that foreign journalists dubbed the three "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." Jawaharlal, a young man, was captivated by the Mahatma and his beliefs. Motilal, a rich and successful lawyer, whose politics had gradually been moving more and more to the left, soon joined his adored son in Gandhi's movement. As Gandhi said, a little unfairly, "Motilal's love for

Soldiers of the Raj in Amritsar arrest one of the hundreds of agitators who, during the 1920s, were stirring up religious hatred between Hindu and Muslim.

India was derived from his love for Jawaharlal."

Thus influenced by British provocation, Indian political attitudes were rapidly polarizing. Gandhi declared that there must be open and widespread non-co-operation with the British. He felt he could speak not only for those who had been inflamed by the affair at Amritsar, but for those Muslims angry at Britain's involvement in a war with their spiritual leader, the Turkish Sultan.

However, the solidarity of Muslims and Congress was to be short-lived. As Gandhi's reputation grew with the predominantly Hindu masses, Muslims began once again to see the spectre of Hindu domination. As some kind of parliamentary system was about to be introduced into India, the Muslims feared the tyranny of the majority would be endorsed at the ballot-box.

In 1921, Gandhi, now in control of Congress, called a non-co-operation movement, rashly promising *Swaraj* for India within a year. The sheer force of his personality persuaded the Muslims to work with the Hindus, but they took care to state "that they did so as a policy only and not a creed, for their religion did not prohibit the use of violence in a righteous cause." Muhammad Ali Jinnah, however, did not consider non-co-operation constitutional, and left Congress. From then until 1934 he was a leader in search of a party.

As had happened once before, Gandhi's call for non-violence was ignored. In August, some Muslims of Malabar murdered as many Hindu moneylenders as they could before the army arrived; in the riots that followed a demonstration against the arrival of the Prince of Wales in Bombay in November, 53 died and 400 were wounded; and on February 4, 1922 a mob from Chauri Chaura village murdered 21 policemen. This incident was the last straw for Gandhi. On February 12, 1922 he called off the non-co-operation movement.

Inside Congress, there were tensions, too. Under Gandhi's influence, Congress had boycotted the elections of 1920 in the hope of preventing the new reforms from working. Unfortunately for Congress, there were plenty of Indians willing to stand for election. By 1923, some members of Congress including Motilal Nehru, decided to ignore their leader, then in jail, sentenced for his seditious activities, to form a new party called *Swaraj* to contest the elections of 1925 and destroy the reforms from within by refusing to work them. Unfortunately, though the new party did quite well in the elections, it was unable to discipline its members, who began to accept ministerial offices.

The young men of Congress, radical-thinking, anxious for revolution, and frustrated by Gandhi's unwillingness to use his growing power with the masses, were beginning to run ahead of him. After his release from prison in 1924 on grounds of ill-health, Gandhi turned away from politics altogether and settled down to campaign for the hand-spinning of cloth, to symbolize India's ability to survive independently by her own efforts. Gandhi's attitude seemed to be not only reactionary but a sign of weakness to the younger radicals. Only mass action could bring India freedom – yet Gandhi refused to raise the masses in revolt. Instead, he offered a strategy of moral blackmail, preferring to assault the conscience of the British rather than their bodies. It seemed obvious that he had failed. So, too, had the activists who tried to wreck the government of the country from within. Opposition faltered.

While the political life of India was stagnating, tensions between the two communities, Hindu and Muslim, were increasingly breaking out into rioting. A pattern of bloody conflict was being established that was to become a regular feature of Indian life. Muslims openly displayed the carcasses of cows in butcher shops, whereas before they had wrapped or covered the beef in order not to upset their Hindu brothers; Hindu processions would bang their gongs as they passed a mosque instead of silencing them as before knowing full well that Muslims demanded silence at prayer time. Self-seeking politicians, whose places depended on divided electorates, incited the two communities to further hate. Muslims were told that Hindus were *Kafirs* (infidels) and it was holy to loot their possessions, convert them by force and rape their women. Hindus were urged to avenge the wrongs done to their ancestors by Muslims.

By the end of 1927 *The Times of India*

Indians with banners and black flags protest at the presence in India of the Reform Commission set up in 1928 by Sir John Simon. Despite its good intentions, the Simon Commission only alienated Indians further by its failure to include Indian members.

could write of the "completeness of the Congress collapse, the utter futility of the Congress creed, and total absence among [its] supporters of a single political idea."

In 1927, the government decided to bring forward the review of the 1919 reforms. It sent a commission headed by Sir John Simon and staffed entirely by Englishmen to investigate their workings. Congress suddenly revived and its leaders refused to meet the commission. Realizing Gandhi's importance, the then Viceroy Lord Irwin, opened up negotiations with him – and was condemned by the British in India for "taking tea with treason." Winston Churchill, spokesman of the diehards, was soon to draw the "alarming and nauseating" picture of Gandhi as "a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the vice-regal palace . . . to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor." But Irwin had a better sense of the realities than Churchill, for Gandhi had once again demonstrated his control over the Indian masses.

Over the next few years Congress leaders decided to demand, not self-government for India, but independence. As the new British government did not respond, Congress made its own unilateral declaration. On January 26, 1930, at gatherings all over India, the Congress flag was raised and those present read together a declaration of independence.

It was almost a non-event. The government of India took no action. The mass of the people did not understand what it was all about. They needed something both commonplace and dramatic to activate them; flags and declarations were meaningless.

Gandhi decided upon salt. It was a weird idea, but typical of Gandhi's immensely astute use of publicity. Everyone in India used salt; in tropical countries men can die without it. Salt was a government monopoly. No one was allowed to make his own; every pound bought was a tax paid to the government. Gandhi declared that he would walk in leisurely fashion to the sea and there gather illicit salt. Most radical Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and a new firebrand from Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose, were either quietly sceptical or openly opposed. But Gandhi knew better. On March 12, 1930, with 79 followers, Gandhi set out from his retreat near Ahmedabad.

The 79 soon became a crowd of many thousands. At their head strode the little figure, half-naked in the simple clothing of the Indian peasant. In his hand was a large iron-tipped staff. Before him the people threw down green leaves as if he were a conqueror. Gandhi expected to be arrested before he reached the sea at Dandi – and was taking a roundabout way of getting there in order to give the government time to act. But non-co-operation is a game that two can play. The government refused to move, and Gandhi continued unimpeded on his way to the coast. Every day of the march brought a rising excitement, and not only among those present. News of Gandhi's march was spreading across India and further, for the foreign press had sent its correspondents and newsreel cameras were also present. By the time he arrived at the sea-shore, after walking 241 miles in 24 days, Gandhi had become a figure known all over the world.

On April 6, after a night of prayer, Gandhi walked into the sea as a ritual act of purification. Then he picked up from the beach a lump of natural salt. And that was all. There were no policemen present and, except for the cry of an Indian woman poet of "Hail Deliverer," the anti-climax was complete. But within a week it seemed that all India was making salt. Away from the sea coasts, no one was quite sure how salt was made and Congress was compelled to issue leaflets explaining what to do. Nehru recalled that "we ultimately succeeded in producing some unwholesome stuff," but it did not really matter whether the product was eatable or not; it was the act of breaking the law that counted.

If a pinch of salt was enough to inspire enthusiasm, it was not, however, sufficient to maintain it. The government continued to ignore Gandhi and the salt-makers.

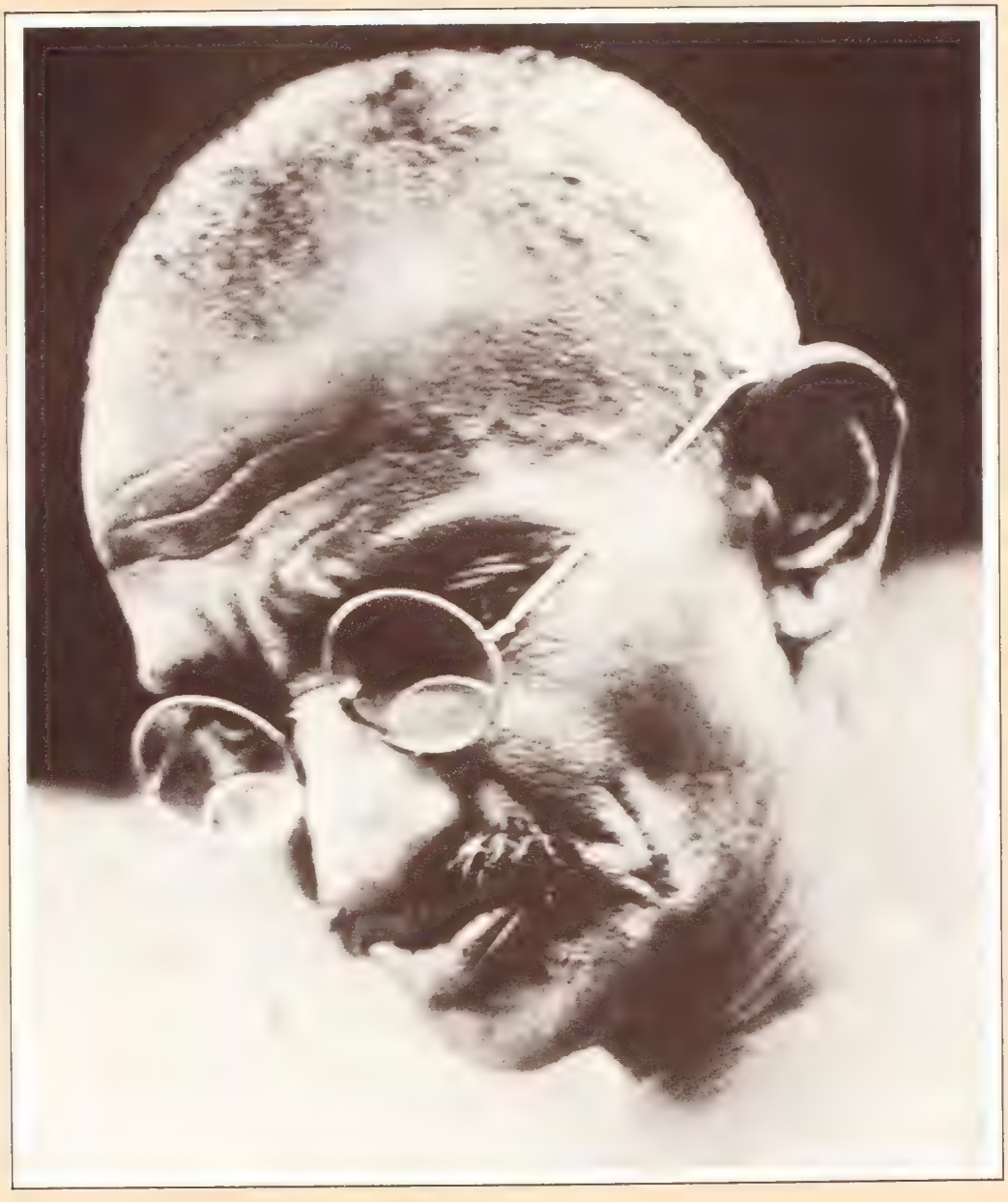
Then two events unconnected with Gandhi changed the government's mind. A band of terrorists raided an arsenal at Chittagong in Bengal and, after murdering six people, escaped. On the other side of India near the North-West Frontier, the city of Peshawar exploded into violence. Men of a native regiment of the Indian Army refused to fire on their co-religionists and for 12 days, until the arrival of British troops, the city was out of the control of the British authorities.

The government decided it could no longer tolerate the direct defiance to its authority in the breach of the salt laws. In May 1930 Gandhi was arrested, and during the next five months more than 60,000 others joined him in jails and special camps. Sentences were punitive – five years for failing to give information to the police, seven years and a heavy fine for carrying a Congress flag. Gandhi was detained without trial. Nehru got six months for breaking the salt laws. Yet at the same time Britain wanted Congress to join in a so-called Round Table Conference to be held in London.

The conference held its first session and some agreement was achieved, but without Congress it was a meeting of minorities. Both sides realized this. The first initiative was taken by the Viceroy who, early in 1931, released Gandhi and the other Congress leaders. Gandhi, always anxious for a peaceful solution, promised to approach the whole situation with an unbiased mind. "I am hungering for peace," he said, "if it can be had with honour." Together, Gandhi and the Viceroy worked out a truce. The government would release political prisoners, Congress would call off the civil disobedience campaign (which had continued in spite of mass arrests), and Gandhi would attend the next session of the conference in London.

Most of the radical Congress leaders were shocked by Gandhi's decision, but Congress had in fact gained prestige. Its leader had been seen to negotiate with the Viceroy as an equal. If Nehru and others had not recognized that fact, Winston Churchill had. But no one really needed to worry. Gandhi was a poor negotiator. He did not impress English politicians and antagonized the other Indians at the conference by maintaining that they represented only themselves and that Congress alone spoke for India. When Gandhi arrived back in India in December, 1931, having achieved nothing, he found that a new Viceroy had arrested most of the Congress leaders. "Christmas gifts from Lord Willingdon, our Christian Viceroy," he commented bitterly.

GANDHI: THE GREAT SOUL



Churchill once referred contemptuously to Gandhi as a seditious Middle Temple lawyer now posing as a half-naked fakir. But, to the masses of India who scattered leaves in his path and called for his blessing, he was the *Mahatma*, the "great soul." By 1931, a skinny man wearing a peasant loin-cloth had become the symbol of an independent India.

Apprentice in South Africa

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi early showed the determination that was to become his hallmark when, at the age of 19, he defied the strictures of his high caste by "crossing the waters" to London in order to study law.

Four years later, in 1892, he accepted a law brief from a family friend in South Africa. He went for one year, and – appalled by South Africa's growing racialism – stayed for 20. He became the undisputed leader in the fight of the Indian community against such discriminatory laws as the one passed in 1913 – and later repealed through his efforts – that declared all non-Christian marriages invalid.

But more significant than the results that Gandhi achieved were the methods he used. During these years, he evolved and practised with a certain degree of success an original revolutionary non-violent form of protest. In 1915 he returned to India ready to put his methods into effect on a wider stage.

As a shy, bewildered, rather mediocre young law student, just arrived in London in 1888, Gandhi showed no signs of future greatness.

By 1913, Gandhi (centre) headed a thriving law practice that employed both Indians and Europeans. The young lawyer was soon to test himself against his toughest opponent – the British Raj.

This photograph of Gandhi (lower right) and his devoted followers was taken by an American journalist, showing that Gandhi had become a well-known figure while still in South Africa.

During the Boer War Gandhi, shown in his military uniform, organized the Indian Ambulance Corps. Though a pacifist by religion, he was fascinated by war, and saw the British Tommy as "altogether lovable."

Gandhi and his wife, Kasturbai, whom he had married at the age of 14, pose for a souvenir photograph before leaving South Africa in 1915.

"Soul Force" and Civil Unrest

Gandhi named his method of protest *satyagraha* or "soul force." By non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience, its believers should, he preached, gladly court arrest, thus shaming the government into capitulation.

Gandhi's first chance to put *satyagraha* into effect on a nationwide scale came in 1919. To force the British to repeal the repressive Rowlatt Acts, under which Indians could be held without trial, he called for a campaign of non-co-operation and non-violent resistance. His call struck an immediate response from India. Cities came to a standstill as the British looked on helplessly. But Gandhi soon found he had started something he could not stop. Indians, unable to accept the self-discipline of *satyagraha*, started to riot in many places.

Appalled by the violence, Gandhi called off his campaign and the Acts remained in force. As a result, after two years in prison for sedition, Gandhi left active politics for three years to urge Indians to discover their national pride by boycotting foreign cotton and by spining cloth on the Indian spinning-wheel, the *charkha*. This symbol of national self-reliance appears today on India's flag.

Special compounds, like this one in a Poona prison, were set up for protesters who deliberately courted arrest again and again.

Anti-British and pro-Gandhi demonstrations, like this one in Delhi in July, 1922, continued after Gandhi had called off his non-co-operation campaign, disgusted with the violence it had unleashed.

Clubs wave in a Calcutta riot of 1926. By now Gandhi was fully involved in his cloth-spinning campaign and made no attempt to control the situation.

A man wearing the white cap symbolizing his adherence to Gandhi's beliefs, belies them by resisting arrest during a riot.

Despite Gandhi's call for an election boycott, many voters turned out in the Bombay elections of 1930 – and found themselves in conflict with the police.

A Pinch of Salt

Gandhi, the man who said, "I love to be in the centre of storms," could not be happy spinning cloth for very long. He re-entered the political arena with a dramatic gesture of symbolical defiance. He would break the laws that made the gathering of salt a government monopoly.

Gandhi set out on March 12, 1930, to walk the 241 miles from Ahmedabad to the coast at Dandi, where he proposed to gather salt. What started out as the rather comical sight – a 61-year-old man setting out on a slow walk with a few followers – turned into an epic march that had the world scanning its newspapers for the daily reports of his progress. The Mahatma himself fanned the interest with dramatic statements. "Either I shall return with what I want," he said on one occasion, "or my dead body will float in the ocean."

Gandhi reached the coast on April 6, a date carefully calculated to coincide with the anniversary of the Amritsar massacre, by now a symbol of British oppression, and picked up a piece of salt from the sea-shore to cries of – "Hail Deliverer!" Now, as a result of the world-wide publicity, Gandhi was accepted by India, Britain and the world as the leader of Indian nationalism.

Defying police, crowds invade the Bombay salt-pans to collect salt, swept along on the wave of enthusiasm that followed Gandhi's march.

Their faces wreathed in triumphant smiles, Gandhi (background, left) and thousands of his supporters defy the law by picking up handfuls of salt from the sea-shore.

Gandhi sets out from Ahmedabad on March 12, 1930, to break the salt laws, surrounded by just 79 followers. Within a day, the procession had swollen to a length of two miles, with Gandhi striding at its head like a conqueror.

Policemen block the way to Bombay crowds, wearing the white caps that symbolized their allegiance to Gandhi, as they try to reach the salt-pans.

Gandhi picks his way carefully across a bank on his way to Dandi in the midst of the procession of devotees.

A Magnificent Failure

After the unrest that followed Gandhi's salt march had petered out, Gandhi, in 1931, went to London as the sole representative of Congress to discuss the political future of India at a meeting known as the Round Table Conference.

Wherever Gandhi went, whether he was walking by the side of the Thames followed by children, talking to Charlie Chaplin or visiting cotton workers in Lancashire, he drew the attention of the ordinary Englishman to India's desire for independence.

The conference itself was an extraordinary affair. The Foreign Secretary, the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State of India sat as equals with a wizened little man dressed in homespun cotton whom they had frequently jailed as a dangerous and seditious agitator.

Little, in fact, was accomplished at the actual negotiations. Indeed, Gandhi was not prepared to negotiate, and simply continued to reiterate his demand for complete independence. A close friend of Gandhi's called the conference "a magnificent failure."

It was a verdict that could perhaps be applied to the Mahatma himself. Though he had unleashed forces that were to tear his country apart he had also, almost single-handed, drawn together the strands of Indian unrest and presented the British with a coherent demand for freedom.

The Round Table Conference opened in London on

Gandhi stands surrounded by enthusiastic Lancashire housewives. He had expected them to detest him because Indian cloth threatened the Lancashire spinning industry.

Monday, September 7, 1931. Gandhi remained silent – he had taken a vow not to speak on Mondays – yet he dominated both this and subsequent meetin

III. The End of the Affair

Soon after his return from the abortive Round Table Conference, Gandhi began another civil disobedience campaign. But it was to fail. The Viceroy met it with severe repression and Gandhi was arrested. There were some isolated acts of terrorism, but the mass of the people had grown tired of constant disturbances. By the middle of 1932, a sullen peace had descended on India. Gandhi, in prison, had apparently lost interest in the freedom struggle again, concerning himself only with the social disabilities of outcaste Hindus. Away in Europe for medical treatment, the revolutionary Subhas Bose condemned Gandhi as "an old useless piece of furniture."

In London, however, things were moving, though with the characteristic slowness of the British legislative process – made even slower by the determination of Winston Churchill and others to hold up new reforms. Finally, in 1935, a new Government of India Act was passed through the British Parliament. It seemed to contain something for everyone, except the more radical Congressmen. Nehru, again in jail, described it as a "new charter of bondage," but for all the criticisms that can be levelled against it, the Act was undoubtedly a blueprint for freedom. Dominion status – that meant complete self-government – had been stated to be the accepted goal. A federal system for India which would unite all the diverse political interests was to be the framework, and parliamentary institutions the form of government. The adverse reaction of some Indian nationalists to the Act was not so much a response to its provisions as a reflection of the fact that, over the last few years, trust in British promises had disappeared.

The most important part of the Act called for almost complete parliamentary government by elected ministers in the provinces of British India. The left wing of Congress represented by Nehru, now publicly acknowledged as Gandhi's political heir, and Subhas Bose, tried to persuade Congress to boycott the reforms. Muslims, who had been divided among themselves for many years, began to find a new focus in a Muslim League reactivated under a new leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They prepared themselves to defend the rights of the minority in the new democracy.

When the elections took place in 1937, Congress won clear majorities in five of the eleven provinces and was the largest party in another three. The Muslim League, which had won no majorities but expected to join coalition governments with Congress, was told that any agreement was null and void. In the arrogance of their overwhelming victory at the polls, Congress leaders thought they could ignore Jinnah. "There are only two forces in India today," said Nehru. "British imperialism and Indian nationalism as represented by the Congress."

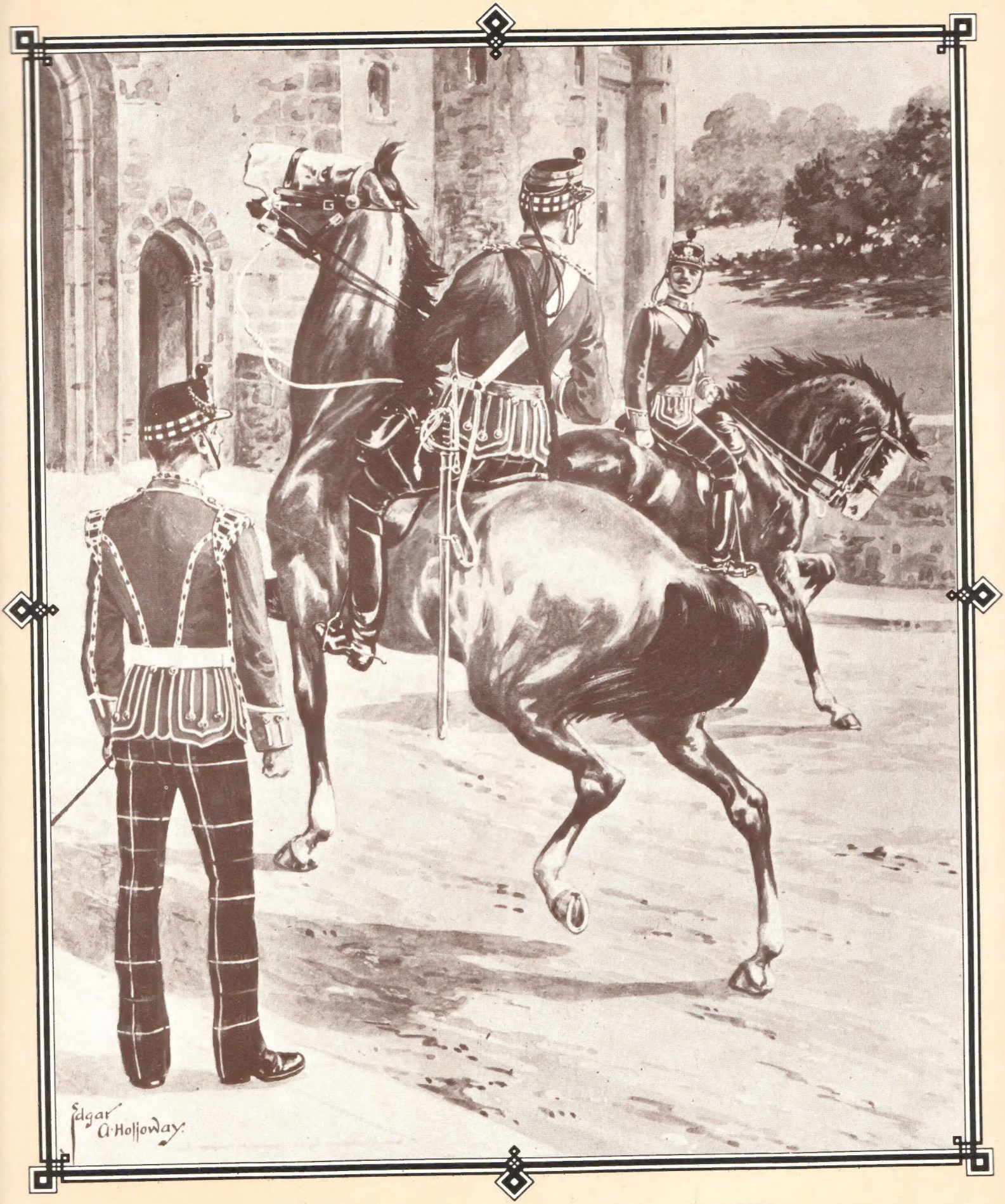
This was too much for Jinnah. He decided to emulate Congress and take nationalism to the people – to the Muslim masses, as Gandhi had done to the Hindu. The propaganda of the League constantly reiterated the threat to the Muslim faith. With the Muslim masses came the Muslim politicians, realizing that Jinnah was a man of the future. Even Congress began to worry about the trend to religious polarization. If the League, as Jinnah was claiming, came to be accepted as the spokesman for Muslim Indians, Congress would lose its claim to speak for all Indians. Attempts to open up negotiations were unsuccessful. The seeds of Indian partition were being nourished.

In a sadly prophetic *Punch* cartoon of 1930, Gandhi tells his genie, Nationalism, "Remember – no violence." The genie, ominously foreshadowing future unrest, replies "And what if I disobey *you*?"

Congress itself was not without its internal troubles. In office, it began to find it difficult to reconcile the conflicting demands of its supporters. How, for example, could the peasants be given reforms without antagonizing the landlords?

There is no knowing what might have happened to Congress if it had not been for the outbreak of the Second World War. On September 3, 1939, the Viceroy declared India at war with Germany. It was his right to do so: the King of England was also Emperor of India. But it seemed to underline once again the essential powerlessness of Indians who, even in matters of life and death, did not count for very much. Congress promptly demanded that Britain should, immediately, state her war aims and their meaning for India. If they included a promise of independence after the war and participation in the central government in the meantime, then Congress would cooperate against a common enemy. But the British had watched the growth of the Muslim League and other groups which could dispute the Congress claim to speak for all India. The Congress demand was not taken seriously, and replied to only in the vaguest of terms. At the end of October, 1939, the Congress leadership made the fateful decision to order all the Congress ministries to resign. All did, though with reluctance.

The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was pleased. Congress he had always considered a "movement of Hindu hooliganism." He now looked, with such enthusiasm as his cold nature could muster, with favour on the Muslim League. Jinnah celebrated his triumph by fixing December 22, 1939, as a "day of deliverance and thanksgiving" to be observed by all Muslims in gratitude for their release from the "tyranny, oppression and injustice" of Congress Raj in the provinces. The chances of a compromise between the two nationalist movements had gone for ever. India was now set upon the road which, through years of bloodshed and suffering, was to end in freedom from British rule. But the hatreds of those years were, at the moment of triumph, to split India apart.



Highland Light Infantry (71st Foot), 1910